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FOUR LETTERS
ON
EDUCATION.

BY
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"Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be
"wise in thy latter end." Prov. xix. 20.

GLASGOW:

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TO THE PUBLIC.

IT seems hardly necessary to offer any apology for the republication of the following Letters. To those acquainted with the writings of Dr. WITHER-
SPON, any thing that bears his name will be acceptable. The Education of Children is certainly a subject of high importance; and it is presumed, that in these Letters it will be found treated in a manner worthy of it, and not unworthy the name and genius of the Author.

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LETTERS
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LETTER I.

AFTER so long a delay, I now set myself to fulfil my promise of writing to you a few thoughts on the education of children.—Though I cannot wholly purge myself of the crimes of laziness and procrastination, yet I do assure you, what contributed not a little to its being hitherto not done, was, that I considered it not as an ordinary letter, but what deserved to be carefully meditated on, and thoroughly digested. The concern you shew on this subject, is highly commendable: for there is no part of your duty, as a Christian, or a citizen, which will be of greater service to the public, or a source of greater comfort to yourself.

The consequence of my thinking so long upon it, before committing my thoughts to paper, will probably be the taking the thing in a greater compass

than either of us at first intended, and writing a series of letters, instead of one. With this view, I begin with a preliminary to the successful education of children, viz. that husband and wife ought to be entirely one upon this subject, not only agreed as to the end, but as to the means to be used, and the plan to be followed, in order to attain it. It ought to encourage you to proceed in your design, that I am persuaded, you will not only meet with no opposition to a rational and serious education of your children, but great assistance from Mrs. S——

* * * * *

The erased lines contained a compliment, written with great sincerity: but recollecting that there are no rules yet settled for distinguishing true compliment from flattery, I have blotted them out; on which, perhaps, you will say to yourself, "He is fulfilling the character which his enemies gave him, who say, it is the nature of the man to deal much more in satire than in panegyric." However, I content myself with repeating, that certainly husband and wife ought to conspire and co-operate in every thing relating to the education of their children; and if their opinions happen, in any particular, to be different, they ought to examine and settle the matter privately by themselves, that not the least opposition may appear either to children or servants. When this is the case, every thing is enforced by a double authority, and recommended by a double example: but when it is otherwise, the pains taken are commonly more than lost, not being

able to do any good, and certainly producing very much evil.

Be pleased to remember, that this is by no means intended against those unhappy couples, who, being essentially different in principles and character, live in a state of continual war. It is of little advantage to speak either to, or of, such persons. But even differences incomparably smaller, are of very bad consequence: when one, for example, thinks a child may be carried out, and the other thinks it is wrong; when one thinks a way of speaking is dangerous, and the other is positive there is nothing in it. The things themselves may indeed be of little moment; but the want of concurrence in the parents, or the want of mutual esteem and deference, easily observed even by very young children, is of the greatest importance.

As you and I have chiefly in view the religious education of children, I take it to be an excellent preliminary, that parental affection should be purified by the principles, and controuled or directed by the precepts of religion. A parent should rejoice in his children as they are the gift of a gracious God; should put his trust in the care of an indulgent Providence for the preservation of his offspring, as well as himself; should be supremely desirous that they may be, in due time, the heirs of eternal life; and, as he knows the absolute dependence of every creature upon the will of God, should be ready to resign them at what time his Creator shall see proper to demand them. This happy qualification of

parental tenderness will have a powerful influence in preventing mistakes in the conduct of education. It will be the most powerful of all incitements to duty, and at the same time a restraint upon that natural fondness and indulgence, which, by a sort of fascination or fatality, makes parents often do or permit what their judgment condemns, and then excuse themselves by saying, that no doubt it is wrong, but truly they cannot help it.

Another preliminary to the proper education of children, is a firm persuasion of the benefit of it, and the probable, at least, if not certain, success of it, when faithfully and prudently conducted. This puts an edge upon the spirit, and enables the Christian not only to make some attempts, but to persevere with patience and diligence. I know not a common saying either more false or pernicious, than "that the children of good men are as bad as others." This saying carries in it a supposition, that whereas the force of education is confessed with respect to every other human character and accomplishment, it is of no consequence at all as to religion. This, I think, is contrary to daily experience. Where do we expect to find young persons piously disposed but in pious families? The exceptions, or rather appearances to the contrary, are easily accounted for, in more ways than one. Many persons appear to be religious, while they are not so in reality, but are chiefly governed by the applause of men. Hence their visible conduct may be specious, or their public

performances applauded, and yet their families be neglected.

It must also be acknowledged that some truly well disposed persons are extremely defective or imprudent in this part of their duty, and therefore it is no wonder that it should not succeed. This was plainly the case with Eli, whose sons, we are told, made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. However, I must observe, if we allow such to be truly good men, we must at the same time confess that this was a great drawback upon their character; and that they differed very much from the father of the faithful, who had this honourable testimony given him by God, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, that they serve me." To this we may add, that the child of a good man, who is seen to follow dissolute courses, draws the attention of mankind more upon him, and is much more talked of, than any other person of the same character. Upon the whole, it is certainly of moment, that one who desires to educate his children in the fear of God, should do it in an humble persuasion, that if he be not defective in his own duty, he will not be denied the blessing of success. I could tell you some remarkable instances of parents who seemed to labour in vain for a long time, and yet were so happy as to see a change at last; and of some children in whom, even after the death of the parents, the seed which was early sown, and seemed to have been entirely smothered, has, at last, produced

fruit. And indeed no less seems to follow from the promise, annexed to the command; "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

Having laid down these preliminaries, I shall say a few things upon the preservation of the health of children. Perhaps you will think this belongs only to the physician: but, though a physician ought to be employed to apply remedies in dangerous cases, any man, with a little reflection, may be allowed to form some judgment as to the ordinary means of their preservation; nay, I cannot help being of opinion, that any other man is fitter than a physician for this purpose. His thoughts are so constantly taken up with the rules of his art, that it is an hundred to one he will prescribe more methods and medicines than can be used with safety.

The fundamental rules for preserving the health of children, are cleanliness, liberty, and free air. By cleanliness, I do not mean keeping the outside of their clothes in a proper condition to be seen before company, nor hindering them from fouling their hands and feet, when they are capable of going abroad; but keeping them dry in the night time, when young, and frequently washing their bodies with cold water, and other things of the same nature and tendency. The second rule is liberty. All persons, young and old, love liberty; and as far as it does them no harm, it will certainly do them good. Many a free-born subject is kept a slave for the first ten years of his life; and is so much handled

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and carried about by women in his infancy, that the limbs and other parts of his body are frequently misshapen, and the whole very much weakened: besides, the spirits, when under a confinement, are generally in a dull and languishing state. The best exercise in the world for children, is to let them romp and jump about, as soon as they are able, according to their own fancy. This in the country is best done in the fields; in a city a well aired room is better than being sent into the streets under the care of a servant, very few of whom are able so far to curb their own inclinations, as to let the children follow theirs, even where they may do it with safety. As to free air, there is nothing more essentially necessary to the strength and growth of animals and plants. If a few plants of any kind are sown in a close confined place, they commonly grow up tall, small and very weak. I have seen a bed of beans in a garden, under the shade of a hedge or tree, very long and slender, which brought to my mind a young family of quality, trained up in a delicate manner, who, if they grow at all, grow to length, but never to thickness. So universal is this, that I believe a body of a sturdy or well-built make, is reckoned among them a coarse and vulgar thing.

There is one thing with regard to servants, that I would particularly recommend to your attention. All children are liable to accidents; these may happen unavoidably; but do generally arise from the carelessness of servants, and to this they are almost

always attributed by parents. This disposes all servants, good or bad, to conceal them from the parents, when they can possibly do it. By this means, children often receive hurts in falls or otherwise, which, if known in time, might be easily remedied, but not being known, either prove fatal, or make them lame or deformed. A near relation of mine has a high shoulder and a distorted waist from this very cause. To prevent such accidents, it is necessary to take all pains possible to acquire the confidence of servants, to convince them of the necessity of concealing nothing. There are two dispositions in parents, which hinder the servants from making discoveries; the first is when they are very passionate, and apt to storm and rage against their servants, for every real or supposed neglect. Such persons can never expect a confession, which must be followed by such terrible vengeance. The other is, when they are tender-hearted, or timorous to excess, which makes them shew themselves deeply affected or greatly terrified upon any little accident that befalls their children. In this case, the very best servants are unwilling to tell them through fear of making them miserable. In such cases, therefore, I would advise parents, whatever may be their real opinions, to discover them as little as possible to their servants. Let them still inculcate this maxim, that there should be no secrets concerning children, kept from those most nearly interested in them. And that there may be no temptation to such conduct, let them always appear as cool and

composed as possible, when any discovery is made, and be ready to forgive a real fault, in return for a candid acknowledgment.

LETTER II.

IF I mistake not my last letter was concluded by some remarks on the means of trying servants to be careful of the safety of children, and ready to discover early and honestly any accidents that might happen to befall them. I must make some farther remarks upon servants. It is a subject of great importance, and inseparably connected with what I have undertaken. You will find it extremely difficult to educate children properly, if the servants of the family do not conspire in it; and impossible, if they are inclined to hinder it. In such a case, the orders issued, or method laid down, will be neglected, where that is possible and safe; where neglect is unsafe, they will be unsuccessfully or improperly executed, and many times, in the hearing of the children, they will be either laughed at, or complained of and disapproved. The certain consequence of this is, that children will insensibly come to look upon the directions and cautions of their parents as unnecessary or unreasonable restraints. It is a known and very common way for servants to insinuate themselves into the affections of children, by granting them such indulgences as

would be refused them by their parents, as well as concealing the faults which ought to be punished by parents, and they are often very successful in training them up to a most dangerous fidelity in keeping the secret.

Such is the evil to be feared, which ought to have been more largely described: let us now come to the remedy. The foundation, to be sure, is to be very nice and careful in the choice of servants. This is commonly thought to be an extremely difficult matter, and we read frequently in public papers the heaviest complaints of bad servants. I am, however, one of those who think the fault is at least as often in the masters. Good servants may certainly be had, and do generally incline of themselves to be in good families, and when they find that they are so, do often continue very long in the same, without desiring to remove. You ought, therefore, to be exceedingly scrupulous, and not without an evident necessity, to hire any servant but who seems to be sober and pious. Indeed, I flatter myself, that a pious family is such, as none but one who is either a saint or a hypocrite will be supposed to continue in. If any symptoms of the last character appears, you need not be told what you ought to do.

The next thing, after the choice of servants, is to make conscience of doing your duty to them, by example, instruction, admonition, and prayer. Your fidelity to them will naturally produce in them fidelity to you and yours, and that upon the very best

principles. It will excite in them a deep sense of gratitude, and at the same time fill them with sentiments of the highest and most unfeigned esteem. I could tell you of instances (you will however probably recollect some yourself) of servants who from their living comfortably, and receiving benefits in pious families, have preserved such a regard and attachment to their masters as have been little short of idolatry. I shall just mention one—a worthy woman in this place, formerly servant to one of my predecessors, and married many years since to a thriving tradesman, continues to have such an undiminished regard to her master's memory, that she cannot speak of him without delight; keeps by her to this hour the newspaper which gives an account of his death and character, and, I believe, would not exchange it for a bill or bond, to a very considerable sum.

But the third and finishing direction with regard to servants, is to convince them, in a cool and dispassionate manner, of the reasonableness of your method of proceeding, that as it is dictated by conscience, it is conducted with prudence. Thence it is easy to represent to them that it is their duty, instead of hindering its success by opposition or negligence, to co-operate with it to the utmost of their power. It is not below any man to reason in some cases with his servants. There is a way of speaking to them on such subjects, by which you will lose nothing of your dignity, but even corroborate your authority. While you manifest your

firm resolution, never to depart from your right and title to command; you may, notwithstanding, at proper seasons, and by way of condescension, give such general reasons for your conduct, as to shew that you are not acting by mere caprice or humour. Nay, even while you sometimes insist, that your command of itself shall be a law, and that you will not suffer it to be disputed, nor be obliged to give a reason for it, you may easily shew them that this also is reasonable. They may be told that you have the greatest interest in the welfare of your children, the best opportunity of being apprised as to the means of prosecuting it, and that there may be many reasons for your orders which it is unnecessary or improper for them to know.

Do not think that all this is excessive refinement, chimerical, or impossible. Servants are reasonable creatures, and are best governed by a mixture of authority and reason. They are generally delighted to find themselves treated as reasonable, and will sometimes discover a pride in shewing that they understand, as well as find a pleasure in entering into your views. When they find, as they will every day by experience, the success and benefit of a proper method of education, it will give them a high opinion of, and confidence in, your judgment; they will frequently consult you in their own affairs, as well as implicitly follow your directions in the management of yours. After all, the very highest instance of true greatness of mind, and the best support of your authority, when you see necessary

to interpose it, is not to be opinionative, or obstinate, but willing to acknowledge or remit a real mistake, if it is discreetly pointed out, even by those in the lowest stations. The application of these reflections will occur in several of the following branches of this subject.

The next thing I shall mention as necessary, in order to the education of children, is, to establish as soon as possible, an entire and absolute authority over them. This is a part of the subject which requires to be treated with great judgment and delicacy. I wish I may be able to do so. Opinions, likes modes and fashions, change continually upon every point; neither is it easy to keep the just middle, without verging to one or other of the extremes. On this in particular, we have gone in this nation in general, from one extreme to the very utmost limits of the other. In the former age, both public and private, learned and religious education was carried on by mere dint of authority. This, to be sure, was a savage and barbarous method, and was, in many instances, terrible and disgusting to the youth. Now, on the other hand, not only severity, but authority is often decried; persuasion, and every soft and gentle method, are recommended, in such terms as plainly lead to a relaxation. I hope you will be convinced that the middle way is best, when you find it is recommended by the Spirit of God in his word, Prov. xiii. 24. xix. 18. xxii. 15. You will also find a caution against excess in this matter, Col. iii. 21.

I have said above, that you should "establish as soon as possible an entire and absolute authority." I would have it early, that it may be absolute, and absolute that it may not be severe. If parents are too long in beginning to exert their authority, they will find the task very difficult. Children, habituated to indulgence for a few of their first years, are exceedingly impatient of restraint, and if they happen to be of stiff or obstinate tempers, can hardly be brought to an entire, at least to a quiet and placid submission; whereas, if they are taken in time, there is hardly any temper but may be made to yield, and by early habit the subjection becomes quite easy to themselves.

The authority ought also to be absolute, that it may not be severe. The more complete and uniform a parent's authority is, the offences will be more rare, punishment will be less needed, and the more gentle kind of correction will be abundantly sufficient. We see every where about us examples of this. A parent that has once obtained, and knows how to preserve authority, will do more by a look of displeasure, than another by the most passionate words and even blows. It holds universally in families and schools, and even the greater bodies of men, the army and navy, that those who keep the strictest discipline, give the fewest strokes. I have frequently remarked that parents, even of the softest tempers, and who are formed for the greatest indulgence to their children, do, notwithstanding correct them more frequently: and even more severely, though to very little purpose, than

those who keep up their authority. The reason is plain. Children by foolish indulgence become often so froward and petulant in their tempers, that they provoke their easy parents past all endurance; so that they are obliged, if not to strike, at least to scold them, in a manner as little to their own credit, as their children's profit.

There is not a more disgusting sight than the impotent rage of a parent who has no authority. Among the lower ranks of people, who are under no restraint from decency, you may sometimes see a father or mother running out into the street after a child who is fled from them, with looks of fury and words of execration; and they are often stupid enough to imagine that neighbours or passengers will approve them in this conduct, though in fact it fills every beholder with horror. There is a degree of the same fault to be seen in persons of better rank, though expressing itself somewhat differently. Ill words and altercations will often fall out between parents and children before company; a sure sign that there is a defect of government at home or in private. The parent stung with shame at the misbehaviour or indiscretion of the child, desires to persuade the observers that it is not *his* fault, and thereby effectually convinces every person of reflection that it *is*.

I would therefore recommend to every parent to begin the establishment of authority much more early than is commonly supposed to be possible; that is to say, from about the age of eight or nine

months. You will perhaps smile at this: but I do assure you from experience, that by setting about it with prudence, deliberation, and attention, it may be in a manner completed by the age of twelve or fourteen months. Do not imagine I mean to bid you use the rod at that age; on the contrary, I mean to prevent the use of it in a great measure, and to point out a way by which children of sweet and easy tempers may be brought to such a habit of compliance, as never to need correction at all; and whatever their temper may be, so much less of this is sufficient, than upon any other supposition. This is one of my favourite schemes; let me try to explain and recommend it.

Habits in general may be very early formed in children. An association of ideas is, as it were, the parent of habit. If then, you can accustom your children to perceive that your will must always prevail over theirs, when they are opposed, the thing is done, and they will submit to it without difficulty or regret. To bring this about, as soon as they begin to shew their inclination by desire or aversion, let single instances be chosen now and then (not too frequently) to contradict them. For example, if a child shews a desire to have any thing in his hand that he sees, or has any thing in his hand with which he is delighted, let the parent take it from him, and when he does so, let no consideration whatever make him restore it at that time. Then at a considerable interval, perhaps a whole day is little enough, especially at first, let the same thing

be repeated. In the mean time, it must be carefully observed, that no attempt should be made to contradict the child in the intervals. Not the least appearance of opposition, if possible, should be found between the will of the parent and that of child, except in those chosen cases, when the parent must always prevail.

I think it necessary that those attempts should always be made and repeated at proper intervals by the same person. It is also better it should be by the father than the mother or any female attendant, because they will be necessarily obliged in many cases to do things displeasing to the child, as in dressing, washing, &c. which spoil the operation; neither is it necessary that they should interpose, for when once a full authority is established in one person it can easily be communicated to others, as far as is proper. Remember, however, that mother or nurse should never presume to condole with the child, or shew any signs of displeasure at his being crossed; but on the contrary, give every mark of approbation, and of their own submission, to the same person.

This experiment frequently repeated, will in a little time so perfectly habituate the child to yield to the parent whenever he interposes, that he will make no opposition. I can assure you from experience, having literally practised this method myself, that I never had a child of twelve months old, but who would suffer me to take any thing from him or her, without the least mark of anger or dissatis-

faction; while they would not suffer any other to do so, without the bitterest complaints. You will easily perceive how this is to be extended gradually and universally, from one thing to another, from contradicting to commanding them. But this, and several other remarks upon establishing and preserving authority, must be referred to another letter.

LETTER III.

DEAR SIR,

THE theory laid down in my last letter, for establishing an early and absolute authority over children, is of much greater moment than, perhaps, you will immediately apprehend. There is a great diversity in the temper and disposition of children; and no less in the penetration, prudence, and resolution of parents. From all these circumstances, difficulties arise, which increase very fast as the work is delayed. Some children have naturally very stiff and obstinate tempers, and some have a certain pride, or, if you please, greatness of mind, which makes them think it a mean thing to yield. This disposition is often greatly strengthened in those of high birth, by the ideas of their own dignity and importance, instilled into them from their mother's milk. I have known a boy not six years of age, who made it a point of honour not to cry when he was beat,

even by his parents. Other children have so strong passions, or so great sensibility, that if they receive correction, they will cry immoderately, and either be, or seem to be, affected to such a degree, as to endanger their health or life. Neither is it uncommon for the parents in such a case to give up the point, and if they do not ask pardon, at least they give very genuine marks of repentance and sorrow for what they have done.

I have said this is not uncommon; but I may rather ask you, whether you know any parents at all, who have so much prudence and firmness as not to be discouraged in the one case, or to relent in the other? At the same time it must always be remembered, that the correction is wholly lost which does not produce absolute submission: perhaps I may say it is more than lost, because it will irritate instead of reforming them, and will instruct or perfect them in the art of overcoming their parents, which they will not fail to manifest on a future opportunity. It is surprising to think how early children will discover the weak side of their parents, and what ingenuity they will shew in obtaining their favour or avoiding their displeasure. I think I have observed a child in treaty or expostulation with a parent, discover more consummate policy, at seven years of age, than the parent himself, even when attempting to cajole him with artful evasions and specious promises. On all these accounts, it must be a vast advantage that a habit of submission should be brought on so early, that even memory itself shall

not be able to reach back to its beginning. Unless this is done, there are many cases in which, after the best management, the authority will be imperfect; and some in which anything that deserves that name will be impossible. There are some families, not contemptible either in station or character, in which the parents are literally and properly obedient to their children; are forced to do things against their will, and chidden if they discover the least backwardness to comply. If you know none such, I am sure I do.

Let us now proceed to the best means of preserving authority, and the way in which it ought to be daily exercised. I will trace this to its very source. Whatever authority you exercise over either children or servants, or as a magistrate over other citizens, it ought to be dictated by conscience, and directed by a sense of duty. Passion or resentment ought to have as little place as possible, or rather, to speak properly, though few can boast of having arrived at full perfection, it ought to have no place at all. Reproof or correction given in a rage is always considered by him to whom it is administered, as the effect of weakness in you, and therefore the demerit of the offence will be either wholly denied or soon forgotten. I have heard some parents often say, that they cannot correct their children unless they are angry; to whom I have usually answered, then you ought not to correct them at all. Every one would be sensible, that for a magistrate to discover an intemperate rage in pronouncing sentence against

a criminal, would be highly indecent. Ought not parents to punish their children in the same dispassionate manner? Ought they not to be at least equally concerned to discharge their duty in the best manner, in one case as in the other?

He who would preserve his authority over his children, should be particularly watchful of his own conduct. You may as well pretend to force people to love what is not amiable, as to reverence what is not respectable. A decency of conduct, therefore, and dignity of deportment is highly serviceable for the purpose we have now in view. Lest this, however, should be mistaken, I must put in a caution, that I do not mean to recommend keeping children at too great a distance, by an uniform sternness and severity of carriage. This, I think, is not necessary, even when they are young; and it may, to children of some tempers, be very hurtful when they are old. By and by you shall receive from me a quite contrary direction. But by dignity of carriage, I mean parents shewing themselves always cool and reasonable in their own conduct; prudent and cautious in their conversation with regard to the rest of mankind; not fretful or impatient, or passionately fond of their own peculiarities; and though gentle and affectionate to their children, yet avoiding levity in their presence. This, probably, is the meaning of the precept of the ancients, *Maxima debetur pueris reverentia*. I would have them cheerful, yet serene. In short, I would have their familiarity to be evidently an act

of condescension. Believe it, my dear Sir, that which begets esteem, will not fail to produce subjection.

That this may not be carried too far, I would recommend every expression of affection and kindness to children when it is safe, that is to say, when their behaviour is such as to deserve it. There is no opposition at all between parental tenderness and parental authority. They are the best supports to each other. It is not only lawful, but will be of service, that parents should discover the greatest fondness for children in infancy, and make them perceive distinctly with how much pleasure they gratify all their innocent inclinations. This, however, must always be done when they are quiet, gentle, and submissive in their carriage. Some have found fault with giving them, for doing well, little rewards of sweetmeats and playthings, as tending to make them mercenary, and leading them to look upon the indulgence of appetite as the chief good. This, I apprehend, is rather refining too much: the great point is, that they be rewarded for doing good, and not for doing evil. When they are cross or froward, I would never buy peace, but force it. Nothing can be more weak and foolish, or more destructive of authority, than when children are noisy and in ill humour, to give them or promise them something to appease them. When the Roman emperors began to give pensions and subsidies to the Northern nations to keep them quiet, a man might have foreseen without the spirit of prophecy,

who would be master in a little time. The case is exactly the same with children. They will soon avail themselves of this uneasiness in their parents, command favours instead of begging them, and be insolent when they should be grateful.

The same conduct ought to be uniformly preserved as children advance in years and understanding. Let parents try to convince them how much they have their real interest at heart. Sometimes children will make a request, and receive a hasty or a froward denial; yet upon reflection the thing appears not to be unreasonable, and finally it is granted; and whether it be right or wrong, sometimes by the force of importunity, it is extorted. If parents expect either gratitude or submission for favours so ungraciously bestowed, they will find themselves egregiously mistaken. It is their duty to prosecute, and it ought to be their comfort to see, the happiness of their children; and therefore they ought to lay it down as a rule, never to give a sudden or hasty refusal; but, when any thing is proposed to them, consider deliberately and fully whether it is proper—and after that, either grant it cheerfully, or deny it firmly.

It is a noble support of authority, when it is really and visibly directed to the most important end. My meaning in this, I hope, is not obscure. The end I consider as most important is, the glory of God in the eternal happiness and salvation of children. Whoever believes in a future state—whoever has a just sense of the importance of eternity to

himself, cannot fail to have a like concern for his offspring. This should be his end both in instruction and government; and when it visibly appears that he is under the constraint of conscience, and that either reproof or correction are the fruit of sanctified love, it will give them irresistible force. I will tell you here, with all the simplicity necessary in such a situation, what I have often said in my course of pastoral visitation in families, where there is in many cases, through want of judgment, as well as want of principle, a great neglect of authority. "Use your authority for God, and he will support it. Let it always be seen that you are more displeased at sin than at folly. What a shame is it, that if a child shall, through the inattention and levity of youth, break a dish or a pane of the window, by which you may lose the value of a few pence, you should storm and rage at him with the utmost fury, or perhaps beat him with unmerciful severity; but if he tells a lie, or takes the name of God in vain or quarrels with his neighbours, he shall easily obtain pardon; or perhaps, if he is reproved by others, you will justify him, and take his part."

You cannot easily believe the weight that it gives to family authority, when it appears visibly to proceed from a sense of duty, and to be itself an act of obedience to God. This will produce coolness and composure in the manner, it will direct and enable a parent to mix every expression of heartfelt tenderness, with the most severe and needful

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reproofs. It will make it quite consistent to affirm, that the rod itself is an evidence of love, and that it is true of every pious parent on earth, which is said of our Father in heaven: "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons: for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? but if ye are without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons." With this maxim in your eye, I would recommend, that solemnity take the place of, and be substituted for severity. When a child, for example, discovers a very depraved disposition, instead of multiplying stripes in proportion to the reiterated provocations, every circumstance should be introduced, whether in reproof or punishment, that can either discover the seriousness of your mind, or make an impression of awe and reverence upon his. The time may be fixed before hand—at some distance—the Lord's day—his own birth-day—with many other circumstances that may be so special that it is impossible to enumerate them. I shall just repeat what you have heard often from me in conversation, that several pious persons made it an invariable custom, as soon as their children could read, never to correct them, but after they had read over all the passages of scripture which commanded it, and generally accompanied it with prayer to God for his blessing. I know well with what ridicule this would be treated by many, if publicly mentioned, but that does not shake my

judgment in the least, being fully convinced that it is a most excellent method, and that it is impossible to blot from the minds of children, while they live upon earth, the impressions that are made by these means, or to abate the veneration they will retain for the parents who acted such a part.

Suffer me here to observe to you, that such a plan as the above requires judgment, reflection, and great attention in your whole conduct. Take heed that there be nothing admitted in the intervals that counteracts it. Nothing is more destructive of authority, than frequent disputes and chiding upon small matters. This is often more irksome to children than parents are aware of. It weakens their influence insensibly, and in time makes their opinion and judgment of little weight, if not wholly contemptible. As before I recommended dignity in your general conduct, so in a particular manner, let the utmost care be taken not to render authority cheap, by too often interposing it. There is really too great a risk to be run in every such instance. If parents will be deciding directly, and censuring every moment, it is to be supposed they will be sometimes wrong; and when this evidently appears, it will take away from the credit of their opinion, and weaken their influence, even where it ought to prevail.

Upon the whole, to encourage you to choose a wise plan, and to adhere to it with firmness, I can venture to assure you, that there is no doubt of your success. To subdue a youth after he has been long

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accustomed to indulgence, I take to be in all cases difficult, and in many impossible; but while the body is tender, to bring the mind to submission, to train up a child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, I know is not impossible: and he who hath given the command, can scarcely fail to follow it with his blessing.

I am, &c.

LETTER IV.

DEAR SIR,

HAVING now finished what I proposed to say on the means of establishing and preserving authority, I shall proceed to another very important branch of the subject, and beg your particular attention to it, viz. Example. Do not, however, suppose that I mean to enter on that most beaten of all topics, the influence of example in general, or to write a dissertation on the common saying, that 'example teaches better than precept.' An able writer, doubtless, might set even this in some new light, and make it a strong argument with every good man to pay the strictest attention to his visible conduct. What we see every day has a constant and powerful influence on our temper and carriage. Hence arise national characters and national manners, and every characteristic distinction of age or place. But of this I have already said enough.

Neither is it my purpose to put you in mind of the importance of example to enforce instruction, or of the shamefulneſs of a man's pretending to teach others what he deſpiſes himſelf. This ought in the ſtrongeſt manner to be laid before paſtors and other public perſons, who often defeat habitually by their lives, what they attempt to do occaſionally in the execution of their office. If there remains the leaſt ſuſpicion of your being of that character, theſe letters would have been quite in another ſtrain. I believe there are ſome perſons of very irregular lives, who have ſo much natural light in their conſciences, that they would be grieved or perhaps offended, if their children ſhould tread exactly in their own ſteps: but even theſe, and much leſs others, who are more hardened, can never be expected to undertake or carry on the ſyſtem of education, we are now endeavouring to illuſtrate. Suffer me, however, before I proceed, to make one remark: when I have heard of parents who have been watched by their own children, when drunk, and taken care of, leſt they ſhould meet with injury or hurtful accidents—or whoſe intemperate rage and horrid blaſphemies, have, without ſcruple, been expoſed both to children and ſervants—or who, as has been ſometimes the caſe, were ſcarcely at the pains to conceal their criminal amours, even from their own offspring—I have often reflected on the degree of impiety in principle, or ſearedneſs of conſcience, or both united, neceſſary to ſupport them in ſuch circumſtances. Let us leave all ſuch with a mixture of pity and diſdain.

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By mentioning example, therefore, as an important and necessary branch of the education of children, I have chiefly in view a great number of particulars, which, separately taken, are, or at least are supposed to be, of little moment; yet by their union or frequent repetition, produce important and lasting effects. I have also in view to include all that class of actions in which there is, or may be, a coincidence between the duties of piety and politeness, and by means of which, the one is incorporated with the other. These are to be introduced under the head of example, because they will appear there to best advantage, and because many of them can hardly be taught or understood in any other way.

This, I apprehend, you will readily approve of, because, though you justly consider religion as the most essentially necessary qualification, you mean, at the same time, that your children should be fitted for an appearance becoming their station in the world. It is also the more necessary, as many are apt to disjoin wholly the ideas of piety and politeness, and to suppose them not only distinct, but incompatible. This is a dangerous snare to many parents, who think there is no medium between the grossest rusticity and giving way to all the vanity and extravagance of a dissipated life. Persons truly pious have often by their conduct given countenance to this mistake. By a certain narrowness of sentiment and behaviour, they have become themselves, and rendered their children, unfit for a

general intercourse with mankind, or the public duties of an active life.

You know, Sir, as much as any man, how contrary my opinion and conduct have been upon this subject. I cannot help thinking that true religion is not only consistent with, but necessary to the perfection of true politeness. There is a noble sentiment to this purpose illustrated at considerable length in the Port Royal Essays, viz. "That worldly politeness is no more than an imitation or imperfect copy of Christian charity, being the pretence, or outward appearance, of that difference to the judgment, and attention to the interest of others, which a true Christian has as the rule of his life, and the disposition of his heart."* I have at present in my mind the idea of certain persons, whom you will easily guess at, of the first quality: one or two of the male, and twice that number at least of the female sex, in whom piety and high station are united. What a sweetness and complacency of countenance, what a condescension and gentleness of manners, arising from the humility of the gospel being joined to the refined elegance inseparable from their circumstances in life!

* The authors of these Essays, commonly called by writers who make mention of them, the Gentlemen of Port-Royal, were a society of Jansenists in France, who used to meet at that place; all of whom were eminent for literature, and many of them of high rank, as will be evident by mentioning the names of Pascal, Arnaud, and the Prince of Conti. The last was the author of the essay from which the above remark is taken.

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Be pleased to follow me to the other extreme of human society. Let us go to the remotest cottage of the wildest country, and visit the family that inhabits it. If they are pious, there is a certain humanity and good-will attending their simplicity, which make it highly agreeable. There is also a decency in their sentiments, which, flowing from the dictates of conscience, is as pleasing in all respects as the restraint imposed by the rules of good breeding, with which the persons here in view have little opportunity of being acquainted. On the contrary, unbred country people, when without principle, have generally a savageness and brutality in their carriage, as contrary to good manners as to piety itself. No one has a better opportunity of making observations of this kind, than I have from my office and situation; and I can assure you, that religion is the great polisher of the common people. It even enlarges their understandings as to other things. Having been accustomed to exercise their judgment and reflection on religious subjects, they are capable of talking more sensibly on agriculture, politics, or any common topic of indifferent conversation.

Let me not forget to speak of the middle ranks of life. Here, also, I scruple not to affirm, that whatever sphere a man has been bred in, or attained to, religion is not an injury, but an addition to the politeness of his carriage. They seem indeed to confess their relation to one another, by their reciprocal influence. In promiscuous conversation,

as true religion contributes to make men decent or courteous, so true politeness guards them effectually from any outrage against piety or purity. If I were unhappily thrown into mixed or dangerous company, I should not apprehend any thing improper for me to hear from the most wicked man, but from the greatest clown. I have known gentlemen, who were infidels in principle, and whose lives, I had reason to believe, were privately very bad, yet in conversation they were guarded, decent, and improving; whereas if there come into company a rough, unpolished, country gentleman, no man can promise that he will not break out into some profane exclamation, or obscene allusion, which it would be wrong to attribute to impiety, so much as to rudeness and want of reflection.

I have been already too long in the introduction, and in giving the reasons for what I propose shall make a part of this branch of the subject, and yet I must make another preliminary remark: there is the greater necessity for uniting piety and politeness in the system of family example, that as piety is by that means inculcated with the greatest advantage, so politeness can scarcely be attained in any other way. It is very rare that persons reach a higher degree of politeness, than what they have been formed to in the families of their parents and other near relations. True politeness does not consist in dress, or a few motions of the body, but in a habit of sentiment and conversation: the first may be learned from a master, and in a little time; the last

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only by a long and constant intercourse with those who possess, and are therefore able to impart it. As the difficulty is certainly greatest with the female sex, because they have fewer opportunities of being abroad in the world, I shall take an example from among them.

Suppose a man of low birth living in the country, by industry and parsimony has become wealthy, and has a daughter to whom he desires to give a genteel education. He sends her to your city to a boarding school, for the other which is nearer me, you are pleased not to think sufficient for that purpose. She will speedily learn to buy expensive and fashionable clothes, and most probably be in the very height and extravagance of the fashion, one of the surest signs of a vulgar taste. She may also, if her capacity is tolerable, get rid of her rustic air and carriage: and if it be better than ordinary, learn to discourse upon whatever topic is then in vogue, and comes in immediately after the weather, which is the beginning of all conversation. But as her residence is only for a time, she returns home, where she can see or hear nothing but as before. Must she not relapse speedily into the same vulgarity of sentiment, and perhaps the same provincial dialect, to which she had been accustomed from her youth? Neither is it impossible that she may just retain as much of the city ceremonial, as by the incongruous mixture, will render her ridiculous. There is but one single way of escape, which we have seen some young women of merit and capacity take, which is

to contract an intimacy with persons of liberal sentiments and higher breeding, and be as little among their relations as possible. I have given this description to convince you that it is in their father's house, and by the conversation and manners to which they are accustomed, that children must be formed to politeness, as well as to virtue. I carry this matter so far, that I think it a disadvantage to be bred too high, as well as too low. I do not desire, and have always declined any opportunities given me of having my children reside long in families of high rank. I was afraid they would contract an air and manner unsuitable to what was to be their condition for the remainder of their lives. I would wish to give my children as just, as noble, and as elegant sentiments as possible, to fit them for rational conversation, but a dress and carriage suited for their station, and not inconsistent with the meekness of the gospel.

Though the length of this digression, or explanatory introduction, has made it impossible to say much in this letter on forming children's character and manners by example, before I conclude I will give one direction which is pretty comprehensive: Give the utmost attention to the manner of receiving and entertaining strangers in your family, as well as to your sentiments and expressions with regard to them when they are gone. I am fully persuaded that the plainest and shortest road to real politeness of carriage, and the most amiable sort of hospitality, is to think of others just as a Christian ought, and

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to express these thoughts with modesty and candour. This will keep you at an equal distance from a surly and morose carriage on the one hand, and a fawning cringing obsequiousness, or unnecessary compliment and ceremony, on the other. As these are circumstances to which children in early life are very attentive, and which occur constantly in their presence, it is of much moment what sentiments they imbibe from the behaviour of their parents. I do not mean only their learning from them an ease and dignity of carriage, or the contrary; but also some moral or immoral habits of the last consequence. If they perceive you happy and lifted up with the visit or countenance of persons of high rank, solicitous to entertain them properly, submissive and flattering in your manner of speaking to them, vain, and apt to boast of your connection with them: and if, on the contrary, they perceive you hardly civil to persons of inferior stations or narrow circumstances, impatient of their company, and immediately seizing the opportunity of their departure to despise or expose them: will not this naturally lead the young mind to consider riches and high station as the great sources of earthly happiness? Will it not give a strong bias to their whole desires and studies, as well as visibly affect their behaviour to others in social life? Do not think that this is too nice and refined: the first impressions upon young persons, though inconsiderable in themselves, have often a great as well as lasting effect.

I remember to have read, many years ago, in

the archbishop of Cambray's education of a daughter, an advice to parents to let their children perceive that they esteem others, not according to their station or outward splendor, but by their virtue and real worth. It must be acknowledged, that there are some marks of respect due to men, according to their place in civil life, which a good man would not to fail to give them, even for conscience sake. But it is an easy matter, in perfect consistency with this, by more frequent voluntary intercourse, as well as by our usual manner of speaking, to pay that homage which is due to piety, to express our contempt or indignation at vice, or meanness of every kind. I think it no inconsiderable addition to this remark, that we should be as cautious of estimating *happiness* as *virtue* by outward station; and keep at the same distance from envying as from flattering the great.

But what I must particularly recommend to you, is to avoid that common but detestable custom of receiving persons with courtesy, and all the marks of real friendship, in your house; and the moment they are gone, falling upon their character and conduct with unmerciful severity. I am sensible there are some cases, though they are not numerous, in which it may be lawful to say of others behind their back, what would be at least imprudent or unsafe to say in their own presence. Neither would I exclude parents from the advantage of pointing out to their children the mistakes and vices of others, as a warning or lesson of instruction to themselves. Yet

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as detraction in general is to be avoided at all times; so, of all others, the most improper season to speak to any man's prejudice, is, after you have just received and treated him in a hospitable manner, as a friend. There is something mean in it, and something so nearly allied to hypocrisy and dissimulation, that I would not choose to act such a part even to those whom I would take another opportunity of pointing out to my children, as persons whose conversation they should avoid, and whose conduct they should abhor.

In every station, and among all ranks, this rule is often transgressed; but there is one point in which it is more frequently and more universally transgressed than in any other, and that is by turning the absent into ridicule, for any thing odd or awkward in their behaviour. I am sorry to say that this is an indecorum that prevails in several families of high rank. A man of inferior station, for some particular reason, is admitted to their company. He is perhaps not well acquainted with the rules of politeness, and the presence of his superiors, to which he is unaccustomed, increases his embarrassment. Immediately on his departure, a petulant boy or giddy girl will set about mimicking his motions and repeating his phrases, to the great entertainment of the company who apparently derive much self-satisfaction from a circumstance in which there is no merit at all. If any person renders himself justly ridiculous, by affecting a character which he is unable to sustain, let him be treated with the

contempt he deserves. But there is something very ungenerous in people treating their inferiors with disdain, merely because the same providence that made their ancestors great, left the others in a lower sphere.

It has often given me great indignation to see a gentleman, or his wife, of real worth, good understanding, but simple manners, despised and ridiculed, for a defect which they could not remedy, and that often by persons the most insignificant and frivolous, who never uttered a sentence in their lives that deserved to be remembered or repeated. But if this conduct is ungenerous in the great, how diverting is it to see the same disposition carried down through all the inferior ranks, and shewing itself in a silly triumph of every class over those who are supposed to be below them? I have known many persons, whose station was not superior to mine, take great pleasure in expressing their contempt of *vulgar ideas* and *low life*; and even a tradesman's wife, in a city, glorying over the unpolished manners of her country acquaintance.

Upon the whole, as there is no disposition to which young persons are more prone than derision, or, as the author I cited above, Mr. Fenelon, expresses it, *un esprit moqueur et malin*,—and few that parents are more apt to cherish, under the idea of its being a sign of sprightliness and vivacity,—there is none which a pious and prudent parent should take greater care to restrain, by admonition, and destroy by a contrary example. I am,

Sir, &c.

LETTER V.

DEAR SIR,

LET us now proceed to consider more fully what it is to form children to piety by example. This is a subject of great extent, and, perhaps, of difficulty. The difficulty, however, does not consist either in the abstruseness of the arguments, or uncertainty of the facts, upon which they are founded, but in the minuteness or trifling nature of the circumstances taken separately, which makes them often either wholly unnoticed or greatly undervalued. It is a subject, which, if I mistake not, is much more easily conceived than explained. If you have it constantly in your mind, that your whole visible deportment will powerfully, though insensibly, influence the opinions and future conduct of your children, it will give a form or colour, if I may speak so, to every thing you say or do. There are numberless and nameless instances in which this reflection will make you speak, or refrain from speaking, add, or abstain from, some circumstances of action, in what you are engaged; nor will this be accompanied with any reluctance in the one case, or constraint in the other.

But I must not content myself with this. My profession gives me many opportunities of observing, that the impression made by general truths, however justly stated or fully proved, is seldom strong or lasting. Let me therefore descend to practice, and

illustrate what I have said by examples. Here again a difficulty occurs. - If I give a particular instance, it will perhaps operate no farther than recommending a like conduct in circumstances the same, or perfectly similar. For example, I might say, in speaking to the disadvantage of absent persons, I beseech you never fail to add the reason why you take such liberty, and indeed never take that liberty at all, but when it can be justified upon the principles of prudence, candour, and charity. A thing may be right in itself, but children should be made to see why it is right. This is one instance of exemplary caution, but if I were to add a dozen more to it, they would only be detached precepts; whereas I am anxious to take in the whole extent of edifying example. In order to this, let me range or divide what I have to say, under distinct heads. A parent who wishes that his example should be a speaking lesson to his children, should order it so as to convince them, that he considers religion as necessary, respectable, amiable, profitable, and delightful. I am sensible that some of these characters may seem so nearly allied, as scarcely to admit of a distinction. Many parts of a virtuous conduct fall under more than one of these denominations. Some actions perhaps deserve all the epithets here mentioned, without exception and without prejudice one of another. But the distinctions seem to me very useful, for there is certainly a class of actions which may be said to belong peculiarly, or at least eminently, to each of these different heads.

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By taking them separately, therefore, it will serve to point out more fully the extent of your duty, and to suggest it when it would not otherwise occur, as well as to set the obligation to it in the stronger light.

1. You should, in your general deportment, make your children perceive that you look upon religion as absolutely necessary. I place this first, because it appears to me first both in point of order and force. I am far from being against taking all pains to shew that religion is rational and honourable in itself, and vice the contrary: but I despise the foolish refinement of those, who, through fear of making children mercenary, are for being very sparing of the mention of heaven or hell. Such conduct is apt to make them conceive, that a neglect of their duty is only falling short of a degree of honour and advantage, which, for the gratification of their passions, they are very willing to relinquish. Many parents are much more ready to tell their children such or such a thing is mean, and not like a gentleman, than to warn them that they will thereby incur the displeasure of their Maker. But when the practices are really and deeply criminal, as in swearing and lying, it is quite improper to rest the matter there. I admit that they are both mean, and that justice ought to be done to them in this respect, but I contend that it should only be a secondary consideration,

Let not human reasonings be put in the balance with divine wisdom. The care of our souls is

represented in scripture as the one thing needful. He makes a miserable bargain, who gains the whole world and loses his own soul. It is not the native beauty of virtue or the outward credit of it, or the inward satisfaction arising from it, or even all these combined together, that will be sufficient to change our natures and govern our conduct; but a deep conviction that unless we are reconciled to God we shall without doubt perish everlastingly.

You will say, this is very true and very fit for a pulpit, but what is that class of actions that should impress it habitually on the minds of children? Perhaps you will even say, what one action will any good man be guilty of—much more habitual conduct—that can tend to weaken their belief of it? This is the very point which I mean to explain. It is certainly possible that a man may at stated times give out that he looks upon religion to be absolutely necessary, and yet his conduct in many particulars, may have no tendency to impress this on the minds of his children. If he suffers particular religious duties to be easily displaced, to be shortened, postponed, or omitted, upon the most trifling accounts, depend upon it, this will make religion in general seem less necessary, to those who observe it. If an unpleasant day will keep a man from public worship, when, perhaps, a hurricane will not keep him from an election meeting—if he chooses to take physic, or give it to his children on the Lord's day, when it could be done with equal ease on the day before or after—if he will more

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readily allow his servants to pay a visit to their friends on that day than any other, though he has reason to believe they will spend it in junketing and idleness—it will not be easy to avoid suspecting that worldly advantage is what determines his choice.

Take an example or two more on this head. Supposing a man usually to worship God in his family; if he sometimes omit it—if he allow every little business to interfere with it—if company will make him dispense with it, or shift it from its proper season—believe me, the idea of religion being every man's first and great concern, is in a good measure weakened if not wholly lost. It is a very nice thing in religion to know the real connection between, and the proper mixture of spirit and form. The form without the spirit is good for nothing: but on the other hand, the spirit without the form, never yet existed. I am of opinion that punctual and even scrupulous regularity in all those duties that occur periodically, is the way to make them easy and pleasant to those who attend them. They also become, like all other habits, in some degree necessary; so that those who have been long accustomed to them, feel an uneasiness in families where they are generally or frequently neglected. I cannot help also mentioning to you, the great danger of paying and receiving visits on the Lord's day, unless when it is absolutely necessary. It is a matter not merely difficult, but wholly impracticable, in such cases, to guard effectually against improper subjects of conversation. Nor is this all; for let

the conversation be what it will, I contend that the duties of the family and the closet are fully sufficient to employ the whole time; which must therefore be wasted or misapplied by the intercourse of strangers.

I only further observe, that I know no circumstance from which your opinion of the necessity of religion will appear with the greater clearness, or carry it in greater force than your behaviour towards and treatment of your children in time of dangerous sickness. Certainly there is no time in their whole lives when the necessity appears more urgent, or the opportunity more favourable, for impressing their minds with a sense of the things that belong to their peace. What shall we say then of those parents, who through fear of alarming their minds, and augmenting their disorder, will not suffer any mention to be made to them of the approach of death, or the importance of eternity? I will relate to you an example of this. A young gentleman of estate in my parish, was taken ill of a dangerous fever in a friend's house at a distance. I went to see him in his illness, and his mother, a widow lady, intreated me not to say any thing alarming to him, and not to pray with him, but to go to prayer in another room, wherein she wisely observed, it would have the same effect. The young man himself soon found that I did not act as he had expected, and was so impatient that it became necessary to give him the true reason. On this he insisted, in the most positive manner, that all restriction should be taken off, which was done.

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What was the consequence? He was exceedingly pleased and composed; and if this circumstance did not hasten, it certainly neither hindered nor retarded his recovery.

Be pleased to remark, that the young gentleman here spoken of, neither was at that time, nor is yet, so far as I am able to judge, truly religious; and therefore I have formed a fixed opinion, that in this, as in many other instances, the wisdom of man disappoints itself. Pious advice and consolation, if but tolerably administered in sickness, are not only useful to the soul, but serve particularly to calm an agitated mind, to bring the animal spirits to an easy flow, and the whole frame into such a state as will best favour the operation of medicine, or the efforts of the constitution, to throw off or conquer the disease.

Suffer me to wander a little from my subject, by observing to you, that as I do not think the great are to be much envied for any thing, so they are truly and heartily to be pitied for the deception that is usually put upon them by flattery and false tenderness. Many of them are brought up with so much delicacy, that they are never suffered to see any miserable or afflicting object, nor, so far as can be hindered, to hear any affecting story of distress. If they themselves are sick, how many absurd and palpable lies are told them by their friends? and as for physicians I may safely say, few of them are much conscience-bound in this matter. Now, let the success of these measures be what it will, the

only fruit to be reaped from them is to make a poor dying sinner mistake his or her condition, and vainly dream of earthly happiness, while hastening to the pit of perdition. But as I said before, men are often taken in their own craftiness. It oftentimes happens that such persons by an ignorant servant, or officious neighbour, or some unlucky accident, make a sudden discovery of their true situation, and the shock frequently proves fatal.—Oh! how much more desirable is it—how much more like the reason of men, as well as the faith of Christians,—to consider and prepare for what must inevitably come to pass? I cannot easily conceive any thing more truly noble, than for a person in health and vigour, in honour and opulence, by voluntary reflection to sympathize with others in distress; and by a well founded confidence in divine mercy, to obtain the victory over the fear of death.

2. You ought to live so as to make religion appear respectable. Religion is a venerable thing in itself, and it spreads an air of dignity over a person's whole deportment. I have seen a common tradesman, merely because he was a man of true piety and undeniable worth, treated by his children, apprentices, and servants, with a much greater degree of deference and submission, than is commonly given to men of superior station, without that character. Many of the same meannesses are avoided, by a gentleman from a principle of honour, and by a good man from a principle of conscience. The first keeps out of the company of common people,

because they are below him; the last is cautious of mixing with them, because of that levity and profanity that is to be expected from them. If, then, religion is really venerable when sincere, a respectable conduct ought to be maintained, as a proof of your own integrity, as well as to recommend it to your children. To this add, if you please, that as reverence is the peculiar duty of children to their parents, any thing that tends to lessen it, is more deeply felt by them than by others who observe it. When I have seen a parent, in the presence of his child, meanly wrangling with his servant, telling extravagant stories, or otherwise exposing his vanity, credulity, or folly, I have felt just the same proportion of sympathy and tenderness for the one, that I did of contempt or indignation at the other.

What has been said, will, in part, explain the errors which a parent ought to shun, and what circumstances he ought to attend to, that religion may appear respectable. All meannesses whether of sentiment, conversation, dress, manners, or employment, are carefully to be avoided. You will apply this properly to yourself. I may, however, just mention, that there is a considerable difference in all these particulars, according to men's different stations. The same actions are mean in one station, that are not so in another. The thing itself, however, still remains; as there is an order and cleanliness at the table of tradesmen, that is different from the elegance of a gentleman's, or the sumptuousness of a prince's or nobleman's. But to make the

matter still plainer by particular examples. I look upon talkativeness and vanity to be among the greatest enemies to dignity. It is needless to say how much vanity is contrary to true religion; and as to the other, which may seem rather an infirmity than a sin, we are expressly cautioned against it, and commanded to be swift to hear, and slow to speak. Sudden anger, too, and loud clamorous scolding, are at once contrary to piety and dignity. Parents should, therefore, acquire as much as possible, a composure of spirit, and meekness of language; nor are there many circumstances that will more recommend religion to children, when they see that this self-command is the effect of principle and a sense of duty.

There is a weakness I have observed in many parents to shew a partial fondness for some of their children, to the neglect, and in many cases approaching to a jealousy or hatred of others. Sometimes we see a mother discover an excessive partiality to a handsome daughter, in comparison of those that are more homely in their figure. This is a barbarity, which would be truly incredible, did not experience prove that it really exists. One would think they should rather be excited by natural affection, to give all possible encouragement to those who labour under a disadvantage, and bestow every attainable accomplishment to balance the defects of outward form. At other times we see a partiality which cannot be accounted for at all, where the most ugly, peevish, froward child of

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the whole family, is the favourite of both parents. Reason ought to counteract these errors; but piety ought to extirpate them entirely. I do not stay to mention the bad effects that flow from them, my purpose being only to shew the excellence of that character which is exempted from them.

The real dignity of religion will also appear in the conduct of a good man towards his servants. It will point out the true and proper distinction between condescension and meanness. Humility is the very spirit of the gospel. Therefore, hear your servants with patience, examine their conduct with candor, treat them with all the humanity and gentleness that is consistent with unremitted authority: when they are sick, visit them in person, provide remedies for them, sympathize with them, and shew them that you do so; take care of their interests; assist them with your counsel and influence to obtain what is their right. But, on the other hand, never make yourself their proper companion; do not seem to taste their society; do not hear their jokes, or ask their news, or tell them yours. Believe me, this will never make you either beloved or esteemed by your servants themselves; and it will greatly derogate from the dignity of true religion in the eyes of your children. Suffer me also to caution you against the most unjust and illiberal practice, of exercising your wit in humorous strokes upon your servants before company, or while they wait at table. I do not know any thing so evidently mean, that is at the same time so common. It is I

think, just such a cowardly thing as to beat a man who is bound; because the servant, however happy a repartee might occur to him, is not at liberty to answer, but at the risk of having his bones broken. In this as in many other particulars, reason, refinement and liberal manners, teach exactly the same thing with religion; and I am happy in being able to add, that religion is generally the most powerful as well as the most uniform principle of decent conduct.

I shall have done with this particular, when I have observed, that those who are engaged in public, or what I may call political life, have an excellent opportunity of making religion appear truly respectable. What I mean is, by shewing themselves firm and incorruptible, in supporting those measures that appear best calculated for promoting the interest of religion, and the good of mankind. In all these cases, I admire that man who has principles, whose principles are known, and whom every body despairs of being able to seduce, or bring over to the opposite interest. I do not commend furious and intemperate zeal. Steadiness is a much better, and quite a different thing. I would contend with any man who should speak most calmly, but I would also contend with him who should act most firmly. As for your placebo's, your prudent, courtly, compliant gentlemen, whose vote in assembly will tell you where they dined the day before, I hold them very cheap indeed, as you very well know. I do not enter further into this argument, but conclude

at this time, by observing, that public measures are always embraced under pretence of principle; and therefore, an uniform uncorrupted public character is one of the best evidences of real principle. The freethinking gentry tell us, upon this subject, that "every man has his price." It lies out of my way to attempt refuting them at present, but it is to be hoped there are many whose price is far above their reach. If some of my near relations, who took so much pains to attach me to the interest of evangelical truth, had been governed by court influence in their political conduct, it had not been in my power to have esteemed their characters, or perhaps to have adhered to their instructions. But as things now stand, I have done both from the beginning, and I hope God will enable me by his grace, to continue to do so to the end of life.

Sir,

Your's &c



A PARENT'S PRAYER.

God only wise, almighty, good,
 Send forth thy truth and light
 To point us out the narrow road,
 And guide our steps aright:

To steer our dang'rous course between
 The rocks on either hand,
 And fix us in our golden mien,
 And bring our charge to land.

Made apt by thy sufficient grace,
 To teach as taught by thee,
 We come to train in all thy ways
 Our rising progeny.

Their selfish will in time subdue,
 And mortify their pride;
 And lend their youth a sacred clew
 To find the Crucify'd!

We would in ev'ry step look up,
 By thy example taught,
 T' alarm their fear, excite their hope,
 And rectify their thought.

We would persuade their heart t' obey,
 With mildest zeal proceed;
 And never take the harsher way,
 When love will do the deed.

For this we ask, in faith sincere,
 The wisdom from above;
 To touch their hearts with filial fear,
 And pure ingenious love:

To watch their will to sense inclin'd,
 With-hold the hurtful food;
 And gently bend their tender mind,
 And draw their souls to God.

OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS.

LET children that would fear the Lord,
 Hear what their teachers say;
 With rev'rence meet their parents word,
 And with delight obey.

Have you not heard what dreadful plagues
 Are threaten'd by the Lord,
 To him that breaks his father's law,
 Or mocks his mother's word?

What heavy guilt upon him lies?
 How curst is his name!
 The ravens shall pick out his eyes,
 And eagles eat the same.

But those who worship God, and give
 Their parents honour due,
 Here on this earth they long shall live,
 And live hereafter too.

LOVE BETWEEN BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

WHATEVER brawls disturb the street,
 There should be peace at home;
 Where sisters dwell, and brothers meet,
 Quarrels should never come.

Birds in their little nests agree,
 And 'tis a shameful fight,
 When children of one family
 Fall out, and chide, and fight!

Hard names at first, and threat'ning words,
 That are but noisy breath,
 May grow to clubs, and naked swords,
 To murder, and to death.

The devil tempts one mother's son
 To rage against another;
 So wicked Cain was hurried on,
 Till he had kill'd his brother.

The wife will make their anger cool,
 At least before 'tis night;
 But, in the bosom of a fool,
 It burns till morning light.

Pardon, O Lord, our childish rage,
 Our little brawls remove;
 That, as we grow to riper age,
 Our hearts may all be love.

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